In addition, a Memorandum of Understanding has also been signed between Oil & Natural Gas Corporation Ltd. and UNOCAL International Corporation of USA for detailed Geoscientific studies only, for areas in Tripura outside the bid blocks.

(c) Oil & Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) is continuing its exploration activities in Assam. It had to stop its activities in Nagaland due to certain problems. ONGC had drilled some wells in Meghalaya and Mizoram, but all went dry. No drillable prospect could be firmed up in Manipur, and the area is considered to have low prospectivity. However, part of Manipur covered under bid block (AA-ONJ/2) has been awarded to Tullow Oil Plc., Ireland for hydrocarbon exploration. Oil India Limited is also engaged in exploitation and exploration of crude oil in the State of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh in North-Eastern Region.

National Literacy Mission

*159. SHRI BRATIN SENGUPTA:
SHRI E. BALANANDAN:

Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have failed to spend Rs. 252 crore earmarked for the National Literacy Mission (NLM), during the Eighth Plan;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps taken to fix responsibility for the underspending?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI S.R. BOMMAI): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. During Eighth Plan, the allocation for various schemes of National Literacy Mission was Rs. 970.47 crores. The expenditure incurred under the schemes was Rs. 717.93 crores. The reasons for shortfall in expenditure were:

— The community and Voluntary agencies extended assistance in cash and kind towards implementation of the programme. More than 10 million volunteers from different sections of society e.g. students, social workers, ex-servicemen, retired govt. officials served as volunteer-teachers and trainers to make literate the adult illiterate in the age group 15—35. The voluntary agencies voluntarily assisted in mass mobilisation and generating of environment conducive to literacy.

— Financial controls were tightened to ensure optimum release and utilisation of funds. Releases were made in instalments strictly as per the requirements of the literacy programme subject to submission of utilisation certificates, where due. The monitoring of the programme was made more effective by enjoining upon the State Directorates of Adult Education to hold monitoring meetings every month.

— Also, there was an economy cut of Rs. 62.95 crores in the budget allocation of the National Literacy Mission during the year 1995-96.

(c) Does not arise.

News item captioned "Watchdog body on plastic lets off big fish"

*160. SHRI GOVINDRAO ADIK: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether attention of Government has been drawn to the news report, appearing in the Indian Express, dated 12th September, 1997, captioned, "Watchdog body on plastic lets off big fish";

(b) if so, the reaction of Government to the observations made therein and facts of the matter; and

(c) the details regarding the action taken/proposed in this regard for environmental protection?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The National Plastic Waste Management Task Force constituted by the Government in September, 1996 has submitted its report in August, 1997. The Task Force has recommended various measures to be adopted for effective management of plastic wastes including the setting up of an autonomous institution to be funded by the industry under the name Indian Centre for Plastics in the Environment. The Action Programme suggested by the Task Force includes a package of preventive, promotional and mitigation measures to achieve the objectives. As a follow-up, the Government has set up an Implementation and Monitoring Committee which includes the representation of the industry associations to overview the progress of implementation of the recommendations, action plans suggested by the Task Force and any other issue related to plastic waste management which is brought to the notice of the committee.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

Slow growth rate of foodgrains production

1086. SHRI O.P. KOHLI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether non-development of adequate irrigation facilities and lack of any significant breakthrough in seed technology are the main reasons for the slow growth in foodgrains output during the 1990s; and

(b) if so, the steps Government to take to remedy the vulnerability of India's food position in the years to come on this account?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (DR. S. VENUGOPALACHARI): (a) The slow growth in foodgrains production during the nineties is largely attributed to the shift in area from cereal crops to non-foodgrains crops due to better profitability of the latter.

(b) To increase the production and productivity of foodgrains in the country, the Government is implementing various Centrally Sponsored Programmes viz. Integrated Cereals Development Programme in Rice, Wheat and Coarse Cereals Based Cropping System Areas; Accelerated Maize Development Programme; and National Pulses Develpment Project besides providing market and price support. Under these programmes, incentives are provided to farmers for use of seeds of location specific high yielding varieties and improved farm implements. Besides, for effective transfer to technology, field demonstrations on farmers holdings and farmers/farm labourers' trainings are being organized. For efficient use of water, financial assistance is also provided to the farmers for promoting the use of drip/sprinkler irrigation systems.

Further, a Centrally Sponsored Command Area Development Scheme is under implementation since 1974-75 with the basic objective of bridging the gap between the potential created and potential utilized and thus increasing the agricultural production from the irrigated commands.

Production of pulses and spices in Maharashtra

1087. MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that despite having potential there is constant low production of pulses and spices in Maharashtra;

(b) if so, the details of year-wise production of these items in the State during the last three years; and

(c) the measures being taken by Government to increase the production of pulses and spices in Maharashtra?